

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 643

By Evans

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend the Bransford Youth and Community Development Center.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those exemplary educational organizations that have made significant contributions, through an abiding commitment to excellence, to their respective communities and to this State; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy organization is the Bransford Youth and Community Development Center in Springfield; the center is a State-chartered, not-for-profit, community-based group dedicated to providing a comprehensive, collaborative service delivery system that strengthens the capacity of at risk families, community service agencies, and their partners to revitalize the community; and

WHEREAS, the center is housed in the former Bransford High School, a school with a rich and intricate history; and

WHEREAS, Bransford High School, a traditionally African-American institution, closed in the spring of 1970, as part of the plan by the Robertson County Board of Education to desegregate schools, sending the students from Bransford High School to the new Springfield High School; and

WHEREAS, a school that holds many sweet memories for a multitude of students and teachers alike, Bransford High School was named in honor of first grade instructor, Miss Lena M. Bransford, who was known by everyone at Bransford as the “Mother of our school”; and

WHEREAS, more than 2,200 students graduated from Bransford High School, and many alumni have gone on to do great things and become leaders and role models for the youth of Tennessee and this nation; and

WHEREAS, after the Bransford High School building was vacated and no longer needed for school purposes, it was first converted into a learning center, offering classes for the developmentally delayed as well as emotionally and physically handicapped students; and

WHEREAS, later, the building housed the Mid-Cumberland Vocational Training Program, which relocated in 1987, leaving the building once again vacant and purposeless; when the decline of the facility became noticeable, the former alumni of the school requested that the county grant them ownership of the building in order to develop a functional community center; and

WHEREAS, their request was honored in February of 1990, when the building was awarded to the Bransford Alumni Association nearly twenty years after the school's initial closing; and

WHEREAS, these estimable alumni used the building as a center for the Bransford Alumni Association, with a focus on renovating the old Bransford High School building to provide a community center to better the surrounding areas; and

WHEREAS, while the high school had once been at the heart of the neighborhoods' and the community's sense of identity, it was in severe disrepair and had become the target of crime; and

WHEREAS, to local residents, the school had and continues to have enormous symbolic significance as a place that resides in the history and the institutional memories of citizens across the community; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, the Bransford Alumni Association, with help from various community leaders, formally incorporated the center for the purpose of organizing, operating, and maintaining a community center for people of all ages, without profit to the center; and

WHEREAS, the Bransford Youth and Community Development Center was designed to offer a full range of services and to provide entertainment, instruction, recreational activities, sports, and other wholesome activities in the neighborhoods served by the center; and

WHEREAS, the center is driven by a vision to restore life and purpose to the community through the resurrection of the old Bransford High School Building; the mission is to enhance

the quality of life for Springfield residents by providing at-risk families with services that will promote and facilitate self-determination and empowerment; and

WHEREAS, the center also exists to foster independence and responsibility in at-risk families, thus providing them the resources to become active, constructive, and powerful citizens of their society; and

WHEREAS, over the years, the Bransford Youth and Community Development Center has become a cherished piece of the Springfield area; children flock daily to the site with hopes of spending their summer days participating in the center's activities; many of these children have to be strongly coaxed when it is time to leave the center for the day; and

WHEREAS, because of the great need in this community, the administration and staff of the center hope to continue their successful programs and institute a variety of new, innovative programs as well; and

WHEREAS, some of the programs that are available at the center or in development include adult education in English and Spanish; GED courses; after school tutoring; skilled labor training; the Bransford Task Force, which is designed to assist the elderly with home tasks; and family focusing, working toward the development of strong nuclear families by empowering mothers and fathers to become strong and positive role models for their children; and

WHEREAS, the extraordinary community initiatives undertaken by the Bransford Youth and Community Development Center have been warmly welcomed by a thankful community which has been uplifted by the nurturing of positive activities and a sense of community being instilled in local youth; and

WHEREAS, the center has inspired applause from its community of our nation and has brought honor to Tennessee, and is worthy of the recognition of this State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the administration and staff of the Bransford Youth and Community Development Center and the community of Springfield for giving a second life to the Bransford High School building and offering a place of hope and productivity for the youth of this great State.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.